

HANDHELDS

FAQ

Q Is it possible to modify the Windows Mobile interface to make it work in a similar way to the HTC Touch?

A Some modifications merely copy the look of the HTC Touch's interface, while others overhaul the way the operating system works. We'd recommend Pointui Home. This has large, thumb-friendly icons and different Home screens for your tasks, calendar, appointments and extras such as the weather, all of which are accessible by sliding your finger across the screen. Pointui Home is free from <http://pointui.com>.



Chris Finnamore
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HTC Touch Dual

★★★★★

£200 inc VAT
From www.expansys.com

HTC's Touch was one of last year's most interesting Windows Mobile smartphones. Its TouchFLO interface made it far easier to navigate Windows Mobile with your finger, instead of having to reach for the stylus all the time. There were a few criticisms, most of which were aimed at the phone's sluggish interface and lack of a finger-friendly keyboard, so you still had to use the stylus to enter text. The Touch Dual attempts to address these faults. It has a 400MHz, rather than 200MHz, processor and a slide-out numeric keypad, as well as an improved onscreen keyboard.

The slide-out keypad makes it slightly thicker than the Touch, but it's still a compact phone. It feels well made, although the slide action has a slightly gritty quality. There are two versions of the Touch Dual. One comes with a full QWERTY keypad, while the other has a normal numeric keypad. The numeric keypad version is the only one available on contract in the UK, so that's the version we tested. The keypad's keys are large enough to make typing comfortable, and the phone's predictive text system is easy to use. However, for longer messages and emails you're better off using the onscreen keyboard.

As well as the usual handwriting recognition options, you have a choice of three onscreen keyboards. There's the standard tiny Windows Mobile keyboard, a new Touch keypad with two letters per key (and predictive text) and a replacement QWERTY keyboard with larger keys. It's just



about possible to use the QWERTY keyboard with your finger, but far easier with the stylus. Our favourite input method was the keypad with a couple of letters for each key, which made for fast and accurate predictive text typing.

The Touch Dual's TouchFLO interface works just like the original Touch's. You drag your finger up from the bottom of the phone's screen to open TouchFLO, and then from left to right to scroll through its various sub-menus. The menus have large icons and provide easy access to the phone's main functions, such as your contacts, calendar, messaging, web browser and music and video. The phone's faster processor makes a big difference, and the previously jerky interface now runs beautifully.

It's simple to get online, as the Dual automatically picks up your data connection settings from the SIM card. HTC has also added HSDPA support, so you can download at up to 3.6Mbit/s, depending on network coverage. However, the Touch Dual doesn't have integrated wireless networking like the Touch, so you're dependent on the mobile phone network for data.

HTC's Touch Dual is a mixed bag. The new keypad and improved virtual keyboard are welcome; the removal of wireless networking less so. It's a compact and good-looking smartphone that's easier to use than most Windows Mobile phones. If you have an unlimited data contract and can live without wireless networking, it's a good buy.

Chris Finnamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ Smooth user interface
- ✓ HSDPA data
- ✗ No wireless networking

SMARTPHONE Tri-band GSM, GPRS, EDGE, 3G, HSDPA, 2.6in 240x320 resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 112MB storage, USB, Bluetooth connectivity, five hours' talktime, 10½ days' standby, 120g
PART CODE 99HDT053
DETAILS www.htc.com

Also consider...

TOMTOM Go 720

★★★★★

£230 inc VAT
From www.pcwb.com

BEST BUY TomTom's Go 720 is an excellent navigator with full maps of Western Europe, a large screen and clear voice prompts. Its most impressive aspect is the Map Share feature, which lets you correct map errors on the device and even upload them to TomTom's servers for other 720 owners to download. It also has Bluetooth, an FM transmitter and voice recognition, making it the best satnav available.



STANDALONE SATNAV 4.3in 480x272 resolution LCD, TomTom Navigator software, TeleAtlas Western European maps, 2GB internal storage, SD card slot, Bluetooth, FM transmitter, 118x24x83mm, 220g **PART CODE** 1M00.760 **DETAILS** www.tomtom.com
FULL REVIEW Nov 2007

APPLE iPhone

★★★★★

£269 on £35-a-month contract
From <http://store.apple.com/App/WebKitObjects/ukstore>

Even after all the hype, the iPhone doesn't disappoint. It's a hugely capable smartphone with a superbly designed interface, powerful messaging capabilities and the best smartphone web browser available. It's not perfect – the recessed headphone socket means you can't use your own headphones without an ugly adaptor, and the internet browser is hobbled by the lack of 3G. It's also expensive. However, it's still the best smartphone we've seen.



SMARTPHONE Quad-band GSM, GPRS, EDGE, 3½in 320x480-resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 8GB storage, USB, Bluetooth, 802.11b/g connectivity, 8 hours' talktime, 10 days' standby, 135g
PART CODE MB213B/A **DETAILS** www.apple.com/uk
FULL REVIEW Mar 2008

COWON SYSTEMS iAudio A3

★★★★★

£279 inc VAT

From www.advancedmp3players.co.uk

Cowon Systems' iAudio A3 is a hard disk-based portable media player (PMP) which can play an amazing number of audio and video formats, as well as record from audio and video sources. It has an integrated 30GB hard disk (a 60GB version costs £40 more), putting it in competition with Archos's 605 WiFi (*What's New, Shopper* 237).

The first thing you notice about the A3 is its screen. Its 4in widescreen display is better than almost every other PMP's screen we've seen. The 800x480 resolution is high for its size, and it produces deep blacks and vibrant colours. Unlike many PMPs we've seen, the A3's screen doesn't have any noticeable lines across it, so images are flawless and video is immersive. Films encoded at the standard DVD 720x576 resolution looked very clear. Audio sounded very quiet, though, and we found that we sometimes had to crank the volume up to maximum to get the most out of films.

The interface is fairly easy to use, but not as intuitive as the Archos 605's touch screen. You navigate the main menu with a directional joystick and click in the middle of the joystick to select icons and media files. Disappointingly, the joystick feels spongy.

To get audio and video files on to the player, you connect it to your PC with a USB cable and drop files into the appropriate audio and video folders in Windows Explorer. You'll need to have your folders well organised, though, as the



player can't sort audio files by artist or album, and just shows a list of files.

The A3 played all our test audio and video files, but dropped frames when playing a high-quality WMV. Films encoded with the XviD codec at high bit rates and quality settings played without a hitch. The battery lasted an impressive four hours and 40 minutes of video playback, so you can fit in a couple of films before requiring mains power.

The iAudio A3 can connect to a TV with a composite video cable, and also comes with a component output for much better video quality. As the player's audio volume was so low, we had

to turn the TV's volume up to maximum. It can also record directly from a composite or S-video source, and recorded video had few artefacts when viewed on the player's screen.

Cowon's iAudio A3 is a superb video player, with an excellent screen and long battery life. Audio output is quiet, though, so you'll have to encode your video with a loud audio track. It's more expensive than Archos's 605, but if you want the best portable video playback, it's the PMP to buy.

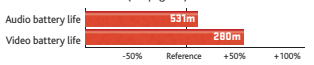
Chris Finnamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ Superb screen
- ✓ Unrivalled format support
- ✗ Quiet audio

PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER 30GB capacity, 4in 800x480 resolution LCD, supports WMA, AAC, OGG, Wav, MP3 audio files, WMV, MPEG1, MPEG2, MPEG2 VOB, MPEG4 AVI, MPEG4 MP4 video files, BMP, TIFF, JPEG image files, USB Hi-Speed interface, 133x222x78mm, 298g
PART CODE IAUDIOA330GB
DETAILS www.cowonglobal.com

PERFORMANCE (see page 62)



CHOOSING A... Smartphone

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

STYLE: Handset
OPERATING SYSTEM: Windows Mobile 5.0
SCREEN: 240x320; 65,536 colours
INPUT: Keypad
CAMERA: 1.3 megapixel
BLUETOOTH: Yes
DATA CALLS: GPRS
 Recommended minimum in grey

1 A smartphone's operating system – Palm OS, Windows Mobile or Symbian – dictates its basic features and what third-party software you can install. Windows Mobile 6.0 has the familiar look and feel of Windows, right down to a Start button, and is found on both handset- and PDA-style smartphones.

The only Palm OS smartphones available are Palm's Treo 650 and 680. There are four types of Symbian operating systems: series 60, 80, 90 and UIQ. Series 60, 80 and 90 are found on Nokia smartphones, while Sony Ericsson uses UIQ for its P900 smartphone series. Windows Mobile 6.0, Palm OS and Symbian all support third-party applications, and there is a vast amount of both freeware and commercial software available.

Symbian is often heavily customised by the phone's manufacturer and so may differ from phone to phone.

2 All smartphones come with a colour screen. A high-colour depth of 65,536 colours is important for viewing photos or video clips.

Users navigate and input information into a handset type of smartphone using the keypad and buttons or a jog dial. PDA-style smartphones usually have a touch screen, and both Windows Mobile and Palm have handwriting recognition features as well as onscreen keyboards. A few have a built-in QWERTY keyboard.

3 Cameras are common in smartphones. Resolution is limited, with three megapixels being the best you'll get. However, as most images will be viewed only onscreen or sent as video messages, this shouldn't be a problem for most people.

4 Bluetooth makes it easier to link your phone to a PC for synchronisation or wireless web access. For internet access, a GPRS or 3G mobile contract is essential. Data is usually billed per megabyte downloaded, but if you sign up for a data bundle when buying your smartphone it will work out cheaper.

ARCHOS 405

★★★★★

£110 inc VAT

From www.play.com

Archos's latest budget portable media player replaces the 404.

Unlike the 404, it has 2GB of flash storage instead of a 30GB hard disk, but it can take up to 16GB of extra storage in its SDHC card slot. The player is easy to use, and video looks good on the bright and clear screen. It's good value, and will become better value as SDHC cards drop in price.



PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER 3½in 320x240 resolution LCD, 2GB storage, SDHC card slot, plays MPEG4 (DivX, XviD), WMV, MPEG1 and MPEG2 with optional plug-in (all up to DVD resolution), plays MP3, WMA, protected WMA, Wav, AAC with optional plug-in, five hours' video playback, 16 hours' audio playback, USB2, 100x13x78mm, 146g **PART CODE** 105914EU V2 **DETAILS** www.archos.com **FULL REVIEW** Jan 2008

PALM Treo 500v

★★★★★

Free on £20-per-month contract

From www.vodafone.co.uk

BEST BUY Palm's Treo 500v is a great-looking Windows Mobile phone with a QWERTY keyboard. Palm has heavily customised the operating system, so it's far simpler to use than most Windows Mobile phones. The keyboard's easy to use, and the Google Maps and Messenger applications are particularly useful. It's also free on a cheap mobile contract, so is great value.

SMARTPHONE Tri-band, 3G, GPRS, 2½in 320x240 resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 150MB storage, microSD card slot, USB, Bluetooth connectivity, 4½ hours' talk time, 10 days' standby, 120g **PART CODE** 10601E-VFN **DETAILS** www.palm.com **REVIEW** Dec 2007

